

For Chief Tabby file:

CHAPTER V

INDIAN PROBLEMS

In the spring of 1866 the Black Hawk War between the Utah settlers and the Ute Indians engulfed Wasatch County and forced these Mormon people to act out a scene of western frontier development which in similar situations had been bloody and filled with terror.

The San Pete Indians, led by Blackhawk, had been forced from Sevier and San Pete counties and resettled in the Uinta Valley in accordance with the Congressional act of May 5, 1864.¹ This new Indian reservation included that section of Wasatch County drained by the Uinta River and its tributaries. Bitterly resentful, these Indians refused to stay on the reservation, and on the 10th of April, 1865, became involved in an incident with the white settlers near Manti, San Pete County.² This precipitated a general Indian war throughout Utah territory.

The Indian threat was singularly well met by the Mormon people, chiefly through the adoption of two very successful policies. The first was an adequate system of defense against the Indian raids and the second was a series of courageous peace overtures designed to change the Indians from enemies to friends. In contrast to other frontiers a general program of retaliation was not involved, although it must be admitted that a few of the settlers, some fifty years later, entertained their wide-eyed progeny with glowing accounts of single-handed skirmishes with the ferocious, painted savages.

The original settlement at Heber had been planned with regard to possible friction with the Indians. The early farmers laid out a fort there. No trouble developed

¹Wasatch Wave, December 21, 1906, p. 6.

²"Report of John A. Rawlings, Secretary of War, to Congress in 1869," Wasatch Wave, December 21, 1906.

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for some time, and so the later settlers in other communities were less cautious in grouping their homes for common defense. However, in 1865, raids and killings in the southern sections of the territory made it imperative that Wasatch County be organized on a war footing. On May 26, 1866, Colonel Robert T. Burton and David J. Ross of the Utah Territorial Militia arrived in Heber with orders from General Daniel H. Wells to enroll all the available men in the valley into infantry and cavalry companies that they might better protect themselves from Indian depredations.³ Burton organized a militia battalion with four companies. Three majors—John W. Witt, John Hamilton, and Sidney Epperson—together with three adjutants—John Crook, Charles H. Wilcken, and David Van Wagoner—formed the battalion staff. The two cavalry companies were captained by William H. Wall and Joseph McCarrel, while John Murdock, Ira Jacobs, Thomas Todd, and John Gallagher headed the infantry companies.

Families which were scattered throughout the valley were ordered to fort up in the central settlements. The Provo River was a treacherous stream to cross at this time so the people on the east of the river went to the Heber Fort; those on the west to the new fort which later became the focal point for the town of Midway. Cattle were placed in common herds and guarded night and day.⁴ The newly organized infantry stood watch around buildings and homes and in addition patrolled the mountain ridges between the settlements and the Indian reservations.

Even with these precautions the Indians made several raids on the valley. On the night of May 15, 1866, before the precautions discussed had been made, they came over the mountains on the snowcrust and ran off

³Ibid.

⁴Joseph S. McDonald, "The Journal of Joseph S. McDonald," MSS, (Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Heber, Utah, 1920), p. 2.

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fifteen cows from Center Creek. The people had all moved to the fort in Heber.⁵ Other raids on the cattle and horses followed.

In July, 1866, Indians took Thomas Hundley's oxen and a cow from his corral in Heber. The scouts in the mountains saw the tracks of their horses the day before the raid and warned the militia. Parties of four, on horseback, were ordered out to track the Indians down. Hundley's cattle were stolen while the militia parties were preparing to leave. One of the parties, composed of Andrew Ross, Joseph Parker, Isaac Cummings, and Sidney Carter later found their trail and followed them over the eastern ridge to their camp on the Duchesne River.⁶

The scouts made their first contact with the Indians when they noticed a thin wisp of smoke curling skyward from within a thick stand of timber. At the sight of this they stopped, dismounted, and after tethering their horses crept as quietly as possible down the hill towards the thicket. These were three Indians. Two slept while the third, who was standing guard, was busy cutting up one of the two cattle which had been butchered. The scouts each picked a man, and at the count of three all fired. Two of the Indians were killed, while the third got away in the timber.⁷

Peace
Ovarations

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While part of the militia stood guard in the valley others were engaged in trying to make peace with the Indians. Early in the spring of 1866 Church president Brigham Young asked Al Huntington, of Heber, to ride out to the reservation on a peace mission. Huntington, an interpreter, was to go alone, contact Blackhawk, prevail upon him to cease stealing and killing and tell him that Brigham Young wanted to prevent blood from being

⁵James Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.

⁶William Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁷James Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

shed.⁸ Although it appeared to be a dangerous mission, President Young promised him that he would not be harmed.

The Indians were surprised to see a lone man come in among them. Blackhawk and most of his braves were not there, but those that were soon formed an angry throng about Huntington. He tried to deliver his message, but the Utes were too angry to listen. In desperation he quit talking, drew his pistols, cocked them, and sat down. Just at this instant a runner came in bringing word that Sanpitch, a chief, had been killed by the whites. This news further incensed the Indians, and Sanpitch's squaw came up shouting, "Kill the Mormon quick, I want to eat his heart while it is still warm!"

At this Sowiette, an old blind chief, stepped into the circle and said, "You Indians ought to be ashamed. You are like coyotes gathered around a sheep, ready to eat it up. This is a brave man who has come here all alone to tell us Brigham doesn't want to kill Indians. He wants peace, and you all know he is our friend." The angry circle then broke up, and one by one the Indians slipped furtively away leaving Huntington to return as he had come—alone.

The Mormon's second peace overture took the form of a gift. Brigham Young ordered William Wall to organize an expedition to take one hundred head of cattle to the Utes on the reservation. Wall chose ten members of his cavalry company together with fourteen others and started out on May 27, 1866.⁹ Upon arrival at Indian Agency Headquarters on the Duchesne River it was discovered that the Indians had gone east to hide their families in preparation for an extended war against the whites.¹⁰ An Indian runner was sent out to call them back and to tell them of the cattle the Mormons had

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⁸William Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁰McDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

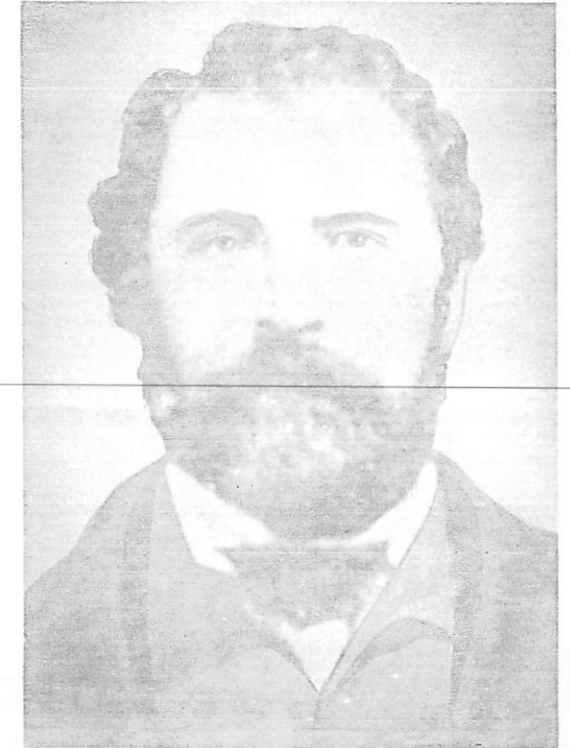
brought. Before the main group of Indians returned a runner came back from Chief Tabby and was immediately taken into the Indian agent's house without seeing the Mormons. Colonel Head, the Indian agent, had come out with the expedition and admonished the Indians not to take the cattle as a present from Brigham Young. He even tried to buy them for the Government to present to the Indians, but Wall flatly rejected the offer, saying, "No sir, you can't buy them, for they are Mormon cattle, and if the Indians eat them they will eat Mormon beef."¹¹

The day before the Indians arrived the owner of the agency store came to the blockhouse where the Mormons were staying to tell them that the Indians were planning to kill them. Joseph S. MacDonald, a lieutenant in the cavalry troop, describes the Mormon's hurried preparations:

The man who kept the store came over and said, "They intend killing everyone of you. I cannot see you killed for nothing. I think they will attack tomorrow night. Now, I have ammunition of all kinds, and as soon as it gets dark so the agent can't see you, send your men over and pack it into this house. All I ask is that you return that which you don't shoot. I have a two inch auger. Set your men to making port holes for yourselves. I have a forty gallon barrel. Fill it full of water for yourselves and pack in wood for use. I have a big rope. Sink some posts in front of the house, bore holes right through it, and put the rope through the holes and tie your horses to it so they (the Indians) can't run them off." We worked all night. Next morning, after breakfast, we felt pretty good. The old agent came over and looked around and finally said, "Gentlemen, do you know whose house this is?" I said, "Uncle's, I guess." He never answered and walked on looking at the port holes we had made until he came to one. When he looked through it he swore and said, "That is straight for my door!" The man that owned the port hole tapped him on the shoulder

¹¹William Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

William Wall
and his five wives,
Nancy, Erma,
Elizabeth, Suzie,
and Sarah



and said, "Yes, and you are the first Indian we intend to kill." I never saw a man get out of a house as quick and he didn't bother us any more.¹²

Indians came into the cedars the next night and camped. When morning came they began to form a line for attack.

Then a messenger from Tabby came in as fast as his horse could run and to our interpreter said, "Tabby is coming in on the charge and says that there are ten or fifteen unruly Indians painted black who intend to start shooting when they get close enough." Al Huntington, our interpreter, slapped him on the leg and told him to go back and tell Tabby that if they come in on the run we would commence shooting. The Indian left. Captain Wall said, "What did you send that word for?" Huntington replied, "I knew if they came in on the run some of them would shoot."

In about fifteen or twenty minutes they formed a line with Tabby on the left and came in on the walk. They surrounded the agent's house and Tabby got off his horse and went in. Captain Wall said, "I must know what is going on in that house. Lt. McDonald, you pick a man and stand in this door and don't let a red man in nor a white man out."¹³

Wall held a brief conference with Tabby in the agent's house while the expedition members stood at the gun ports awaiting the impending attack. He told of the gift of cattle and food and also of the Mormons' desire to talk of peace. Tabby said, "Tomorrow at sunup I will fetch ten warriors with me." The Captain accepted but warned Tabby not to come armed.

At sunup the Indians came. Every one of them was painted black with war clubs slung on their wrists and pistols hidden under their blankets. The block house was divided into two rooms with a door between. Wall's twenty-four men stood in the east room and the Indians

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 9.

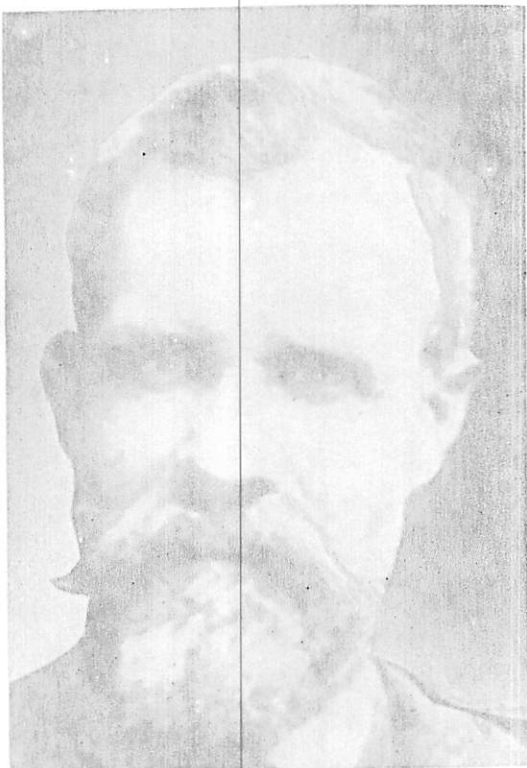
in the west. Lt. MacDonald stood in the door between the two parties. Wall and Tabby sat down together. Tabby spoke, telling the Indian grievances and how they had been created. The Captain interrupted, saying, "We have been at war; now we want peace. We are here to make peace. We must stop killing each other." The blackened Indians were displeased with Wall's proposal, but when they protested Tabby ordered them to be quiet.

The conference lasted all day. First Tabby spoke and then Wall. At times they both became angry. Tabby demanded that the Mormons kill a man in San Pete County. Wall refused, saying that the laws would not allow it. As evening approached Tabby agreed, in general, to the proposed peace settlement. His agreement was not binding on Blackhawk and the renegade Indians following him, but the peace settlement did adjust the very real differences between this chief and the Mormons. Twelve days after starting out the expedition returned home to anxious families and friends. They found a militia company prepared to go in search for the peace makers since many feared that they had been massacred by the Indians. Instead, the relieved people honored them with a party the night after their arrival. !

Renegade Indians, however, continued to make raids on the valley stealing a few horses and cattle whenever they could. Another expedition with food for the Indians was sent out on the 8th of July but met with little success.¹⁴ 3

The winter of 1866-67 severely taxed the Ute's food supply, and in March a hungry Tabby with his braves came to Heber to smoke the peace pipe with his white

¹⁴*Wasatch Wave*, Dec. 21, 1906, p. 7.



Joseph S. McDonald



Chief Tabby

friends and eat some of their beef. A feast was held in the bowery at Heber; and the Indians were given blankets, flour, and eighty head of cattle to alleviate their suffering.¹⁵

A brief account of the military leader, William Madison Wall, will illustrate the courageous leadership available to the Wasatch pioneers in meeting the Indian threat. He was the son of Isaac and Nancy Wall, born September 30, 1821, in Rottenham County, North Carolina. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1842, and when the saints left Nauvoo, Illinois, on their westward march he accompanied them. He assisted in organizing the Mormon Battalion, and in 1850 he crossed the plains in the seventh pioneer company as a captain of fifty.¹⁶ He settled in Provo, Utah, and was bishop of the Provo Fourth Ward there from 1852 to 1854. In 1856 the Church called him for a mission to Australia, where he served as President of the New South Wales Conference until June of 1857.¹⁷

His return from Australia in charge of a company of Mormon immigrants serves to illustrate Wall's courage and tenacity. Upon arriving in California he found much animosity. An immigrant train for California had been massacred at Mountain Meadows, in southern Utah, and feeling against the Mormon people was running high. During the night various groups of angered citizens sought his life even though he had just that day arrived by ship in San Pedro. Twice they threatened to break into his hotel room to kill him. Being unarmed, he tore

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶"Biographical papers of Andrew Jenson," (L. D. S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, 1916).

¹⁷*Journal History*, December 12, 1857.

the wooden roller from his bed and in a calm voice told the gathering outside his door that he knew that the door was flimsy and that they could break in but that he would kill the first one who came in. There were no volunteers to be first. The next morning, upon leaving the hotel, a mob with ropes surrounded him. He felt his time to die had come and asked to speak a few last words.

I had one little wish to impress upon their minds, and that was that some of them had to die in the operation and I did not wish to kill any man that had a drop of honest blood in him; if there were any such men I begged them to withdraw and let the worst hounds they had remain to do the deed, as I should certainly kill three or four.¹⁸

The members of the mob suddenly felt very honest and withdrew.

William Wall was appointed Marshall of Provo and Utah County Sheriff shortly after his return, and because of the presence of the United States Army under General Johnston and the resultant friction between Mormons and anti-Mormons his time in office was seldom dull. Illustrative of this is the casual reference in the Deseret News of January 6, 1859, that last Friday evening when W. M. Wall, Marshall of Provo, was walking through the streets of that city a ball was shot through his hat and grazed his head and knocked him down.

He had many experiences dealing with the Indians which later proved invaluable to the people of Wasatch County. His ranch in the mouth of Provo Canyon was among the first settlements in the Provo Valley. He served as the first presiding elder of the valley and was

¹⁸*Ibid.*

later called upon when the people experienced the Indian troubles.

The success that the people had in dealing with the Indians was in no small measure due to the courage of leaders like William M. Wall.

